THE WOMEN'S
NATIONAL
INDIAN ASSOCIATION.

REPORT

OF

The Hospital Department,

BY

MISS LAURA E. TILESTON.

NOVEMBER, 1891.

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The Hospital Department,

BY ITS CHAIRMAN,

MISS LAURA E. TILESTON.

One of the greatest present needs among the Indians is hospital work. By this we do not mean simply a building where the sick may be cared for, but a far-reaching work which shall enter the homes, teach the parents how to care for the children, and the children how to care for themselves. Ventilation and hygiene are almost unknown in the Indian country. In the long ago, when tents were the only houses known, the inside condition of things was not so bad. A large opening at the top of the tent let out the smoke of the open fire on the ground below. There was good circulation, and plenty of fresh air admitted around the edges and through the door. The earth floor absorbed whatever was thrown upon it, and before there was time for it to be unclean a hunt or some outside interest moved the whole place of abode to some distant ground. Spring and fall housecleaning was the result, with new floors and new everything. Now it is all changed, and instead there is a little log house, full of people, overheated by a great fire in a close stove, and with meat in one corner, given out one Friday and kept housed until the next, or as long as it lasts. Two tiny windows, seldom opened, and an earthen floor which receives anything that drops, and is lived on from one year's end to another, complete the picture. Can you conceive why the Indians have lung and blood troubles?

To relieve this state of affairs we began work last fall

by begging money to support a hospital and training-school in nursing, on the Crow Creek reserve, Dakota. Before long it became evident that General Morgan, the Honorable Commissioner of Indian Affairs, was ready to aid our project. Within the last two months Government has decided to erect the building and support the work at that point. Our plans, which were carefully prepared for our own hospital, were too expensive for the Government appropriation, still the building will be well furnished and much good will result.

It cannot be finished for several months, and in the meantime money which has been sent us from various private clubs and individuals will be used for a temporary hospital, and for such good as outside training may do. Miss Porter, who has acted as head nurse at Hampton Institute for the past nine years, has gone to Crow Creek as "field matron," for the winter. In accepting this position, which General Morgan has just extended to her, her salary is secured, and she is allowed to visit freely among the Indians. Her work will be, primarily, to care for the sick ; and some building will be secured for this purpose for the winter. She will also give instruction in hygiene in the school, and visit the homes, doing all that she can to teach the women better ways of living. The expenses of the hospital will be met through the money which we have in the treasury from various sources. One hundred and fifty dollars were raised in Jamaica Plain, through the kind interest of Miss Ives, by the young daughters of Mr. Whitcomb, and this has been given to this work. It came as a great boon, and made us feel renewed energy in carrying forward the work. The rest of the $390, now in the hands of Miss Tileston to meet expenses until spring, was contributed through Miss Porter and Mrs. Richards, of Hampton, and others; and came from Indian women in Dakota, Indian and colored girls in the Hampton Institute, and others. The repairs on the cottage selected as temporary hospital will cost about $120, and the rest of the fund in hand will be used for current expenses until Government assumes all the cost of the work.

Sheets, pillow cases, towels, soap, bandages, etc., have been sent from various church societies, and we hope to hear soon of the full beginning of the enterprise. Recently Miss Porter wrote : "I arrived Friday, and Saturday visited a young man who is dying of consumption. His wife and he were both Hampton students, and their home was neat, so with the sheets I could make him comfortable. I gave him a bath, and shall carry some porridge this afternoon. There are many cases for which little can be done until we have the hospital. To-day Dr. Treon and I have looked at the site, and it is a very good one. Water-works are being put in, and the building will be heated with steam. Many of those I visited are in consumption. Many of the houses are unfit places to care for the sick in, and others are quite clean. Please send bandages in your barrels, as there will be great need of muslin. There are a number of children for me to care for as soon as I have the build-ing."

This is help for but one of the many places which need just such work done ; and we believe, if trained nurses can be found to enter this service and do what they can, a way will be opened for them to accomplish great good.

In accepting the position of chairman of the "Hospital Committee," I did not fully realize my responsibility to the Association as well as to the work for Indians, for had I done so I should have foreseen that my school duties would interfere with my duties as head of the committee. I feel a sincere interest in the new department, but my work on this committee has to be secondary, and done rather as my recreation. The Crow Creek hospital is secured, and therefore the first interest has not been neglected, though this department of the Association has gained us few new members, because I have not had time to seek them. That both interests may gain more help during the coming year I resign my chair in order that one with more time at command may be found to take the leadership of the Hospital Department.

Respectfully submitted,

LAURA E. TILESTON.

REPORT

OF

SUSAN LA FLESCHE, M. D.,

Medical Missionary

OF

THE WOMEN'S NATIONAL INDIAN ASSOCIATION AMONG THE OMAHA INDIANS.

OMAHA AGENCY, NEB.,
October 24, 1891.

Dear Friends: It has been almost a year since I wrote you officially, and to me it has been one of the shortest and happiest, as it has been so full of work and pleasure. I wish some of you were here to enjoy the balmy October air of this beautiful Indian-summer day; the air is so pure and exhilarating it gives new life to us who are fortunate enough to breathe it.

It has been two years since I returned from the East to engage in medical work among my people. I had a good many patients the first year, but this year I have a great deal more work to do, particularly this summer and fall. Last winter there were two epidemics of la grippe or influenza, which kept me busy. There were some very bad cases, particularly among the adults, but there were only a few deaths of babies, two only occurring in my practice. Most of the tribe were away from home at the time and had a hard time with it, as the snow was

very deep. There were no fatal cases among the adults. When I came I was the Government physician for the school; later I also attended many of the Indians, and now for the last quarter I have had a case in almost every family in the whole tribe.

I have not been able to make as many visits as I should wish, on account of having had no team here. I had to furnish my own horses, buggy, harness, and feed for my horses, which made it rather hard. In a great many cases I hired a team, which made it rather expensive; in others I walked where the patients were but a mile or so away. In other cases, when the patients were very ill their friends came after me with their own teams and wagons, and in other cases still, where the patients had only some trifling ailment, they themselves came after the medicine. The latter is usually the case. I have made a great many more visits than I did the first year, and as I am able to keep my own horses now, I am able to do away with all these inconveniences.

Some times there is more work in one month than in another. Some days (only a few times, though,) there may be only half a dozen or ten in; but almost all the time it averages ten a day. Most of these come for medical treatment; some for help and advice in business matters of all kinds; others to have letters read for them, or interpreted, or to have letters written. Every one comes for a purpose.

During the month of July I had 37 patients only, for I was away for a week's vacation. In August I had 111; in September, 130; and this month, so far, 100 cases. I have had both acute and chronic cases, the principal ones, and a majority, being in the spring and fall. There have been epidemics of "epidemic catarrh" or influenza, dysentery and cholera morbus among the adults, cholera uinfantm among the infants, and malarial fevers, the last epidemic being sore eyes, or muco-purulent ophthalmia or conjunctivitis. The last disease has attacked all, regardless of age; but it is now at an end, and there were not as many as there might have been, for they followed my instructions to use separate towels and basins to pre-

vent contagion. I have had about twenty cases of bronchitis already, beginning with colds.

The office built for me by the Government, for the accommodation of the school children is an exceedingly nice one, and very well furnished. It is a building 20 by 14 feet, wainscoted, walls hard finished, and everything, inside and out, is well finished. It is arranged like a drug store, as there are a great many Government drugs; a counter with drawers in it for bandages, absorbent cotton, and instruments. I have one drawer full of games, and underneath the counter it is all filled with scrap-books and picture papers, while another drawer has my writing materials in it, ready for use and needed sometimes half a dozen times a day. On rainy days usually I have a great many visitors, and the scrap-books and magazines are brought into use, and also the games, as well as during evenings, when they want to spend a pleasant hour and have no other place to go to. So you see the office is used just as much by the tribe as by my children here.

At the last annuity payment each Indian received about sixty-five dollars, and they made splendid use of the money. Over fifty houses were built, most of them on the plan of this office, as the people like the way it is built. They bought machinery of all kinds; plows, cultivators, cornstalk cutters, mowers, seeders, rakes, farm wagons, buggies, light wagons, stoves, and about 200 good working horses. You can easily see how much they have improved accordingly. Almost all of them are having wells dug, which is another new improvement.

It delights and encourages all friends of the Indians to see how much the Omahas are improving, and what good use they made of their money.

About the church work: we have church service Sunday mornings, at which we assist by singing and interpreting. We have a Christian Endeavor meeting for the young people Sunday evenings, and a prayer-meeting on Wednesdays. In all these we help all we possibly can by speaking, etc.

All of us young ladies here assist some of the women

with their sewing, and give what little time we can spare to it, and sometimes take turns in helping them with it. I have had more medical work among the women than I expected, which pleases me very much, and I have been called in to attend some cases where a white physician was never called before. All this shows how much they are improving, in more ways than one. At some of the funerals they have Christian service over the dead, and ask for it even when they themselves are not Christians, though they usually celebrate their customs besides. Only a few years ago this Christian service was not thought of.

All scrap-books and picture papers which were sent to me I have used. Last winter I had a beautiful box sent to me from a band of ladies in Troy; this was full of reading matter, besides the contents of other boxes which I kept here to be read, and taken, or distributed. Picture papers and scrap-books are gratefully received, and used, always.

I live here at the Government school, where I am still the school physician, and my sister, Mrs. Marguerite Picotte, is the principal teacher. Mr. Watson, the superintendent, is well liked by the people, and the parents have brought in their children very promptly. We are full to overflowing now, and cannot possibly take in more. Many have been turned away, although some have brought their children back twice and begged to have them taken. The school is vastly improved. There are several nice new buildings, one a large one, containing carpenter and blacksmith shops, in which to teach the Indians these trades.

There is a class of white people here now on the reservation, whose thought is to help the Indians in all ways they possibly can. Such people are a help and comfort, as they "lend a hand" to all the Indians, and the workers here as well.

I am enjoying my work exceedingly, and feel more interest in, and more attached to my people than ever before. I have not a single thing to complain of, for

"surely my lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places," and my life here is a very happy one.

I thank you so much for all you have done for me and my people, and hope to write you again soon of the home-life of these people.

Very sincerely yours,

SUSAN LA FLESCHE, M. D.

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